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SUBJECT: SENATOR LEVIN MEETS JORDAN'S KING ABDULLAH

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires David Hale according to Section 1.4 (b and d)

11. (C) Summary: Senator Levin met King Abdullah on July 7 to discuss key issues in the region, most notably the Iraq reconstruction process. The King commented on the ongoing insurgency, and identified steps to end it, including a more inclusive political process and poverty alleviation. The King also spoke about U.S. efforts to encourage reform in Syria, expressing some doubt that any real progress had been made. Also attending the meeting were Charge d'Affaires David Hale, U.S. Senate staff members Richard Deobes and Daniel Cox, Jordanian Foreign Minister Farouq Qasrawi, and Royal Court Policy Coordination Director Abdullah Wraikat. End Summary.

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IRAQ TOPS THE AGENDA  
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12. (C) The King was frank when asked for his assessment of the insurgency in Iraq. He said that he saw no sign of a respite from the flow of foreign fighters into Iraq. The King estimated that they numbered in the "hundreds" not "thousands", which in his mind is sufficient to provide an ample reserve of suicide bombers. Additionally, the King feared that Iraqis were now taking a larger role in the insurgency, replacing the foreigners. The King noted indigenous extremist forces would be much more difficult to defeat than foreign fighters.

13. (C) When asked, the King offered his recommendations to Senator Levin on how best to defeat the insurgency. Foremost among these was political inclusion. Positive progress in drafting a constitution with the participation of credible Sunni representatives was critical, according to the King. If Sunni leadership was brought into the political process, it would have an incentive and a responsibility to fight against the insurgency. If the December 2005 elections are inclusive, he noted, Iraq will have turned a new page. If they are not, and the Sunnis continue to feel isolated, they will be pushed toward the extreme.

14. (C) The King said that not enough was being done to address poverty in Iraq. At this point, he said, you could get an Iraqi to "do anything" for a few hundred dollars. Alleviating this suffering would help pull some of the disenfranchised elements of society back into the mainstream. On other fronts, the King was more positive. He stated that continued Sunni outreach was a necessary step. He stressed the importance of adequately equipping and training Iraqi police and security elements, and he assessed that military training had proven more successful than police training, noting that it was a difficult task to balance quality training with the need for quick turnover. When asked, the King said that he could only venture a guess of 50/50 odds that the insurgency would end in the foreseeable future. He agreed with Senator Levin that there needs to be an effort to convince skeptics that the U.S. will stand down once Iraqi security forces are able to stand up on their own. Again when asked, he agreed that an Iraqi National Assembly endorsement of the U.S. presence in Iraq might be helpful, but only if embraced by all factions. He also agreed that additional international involvement with coalition forces would be desirable, but cautioned that not all nationalities would be welcome. Specifically with regard to the involvement of Muslim states, the King said that participants, possibly as part of a UN action, would have to be drawn from regions distant from Iraq, such as Indonesia or Morocco, to avoid the perception that Iraq's Muslim neighbors were participating solely to advance their own agendas.

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KING: SYRIAN BEHAVIOR LARGELY UNCHANGED  
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15. (C) Asked by the Senator for his thoughts on developments in Syria, the King remarked that Syrian behavior on key issues, such as their support for Hizballah and the exfiltration of terrorists across their borders, had not changed significantly. They Syrian strategy has been to offer just enough concessions to appease the international community and obtain relief from U.S. pressure, but not to make any real strategic policy changes.

16. (U) Senator Levin did not have an opportunity to clear this message.

